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Title of Invention: Pitch and Putt Lawn Golf

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DESCRIPTION

This application is a continuation of, and claims priority from, co-pending U.S. Conventional Utility Application Serial No. 09/167,094, filed 10/05/98, entitled Pitch and Putt Lawn Golf, which is herein incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention.

This invention generally relates to outdoor games. More specifically, this invention relates to outdoor games for practicing golf skills and entertainment.

Related Art.

Innumerable outdoor games exist in general. A certain number of games involving hitting an object through a hoop exist as well.

Many of these games require a player to strike an object through a "U-shaped" hoop, such as a croquet game. For instance, U.S. Patent No. 4,256,308 (*Schlueter et al.*) discloses a golf

game target and game comprising a series of nine stakes, each having a hoop, inserted into the ground through which a player kicks a golf ball. However, the *Schlüter* patent does not disclose a game that improves a player's skills through the use of golf clubs to putt and pitch a golf ball through the hoops.

Other games require the user to strike an object through a ring-shaped hoop. For instance, U.S. Patent No. 3,052,226 (*Woll*) discloses a game comprising the use of looped sticks for manipulating a ball through a hoop-shaped target. Another U.S. Patent, No. 4,111,422 (*Burcenski*), discloses a game requiring a player to hit a missile through ring-shaped targets. Neither of these patents discloses a lawn golf game, nor do they disclose a game using a golf ball and a golf club.

There are also design patents disclosing hoop targets for lawn games. For instance, U.S. Patent, No. D 310,698 (*Cooper*) shows a design for an upright hoop unit for a lawn golf game and U.S. Patent, No. D 243,782 (*Hickey*) discloses a hoop target for a lawn game. However, neither of these patents discloses an inverted "U-shaped" hoop.

What is needed is a lawn golf game where the user pitches and puts a golf ball with a golf club through a series of inverted, numbered "U-shaped" hoops.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a pitch and putt lawn golf game that can be played by persons of all ages, and by both golfers and non-golfers alike.

The game comprises a series of hole markers and a golf ball, a putter, and a wedge for every player playing the game. Alternatively, the game may also comprise a set of irons in place of, or in addition to, the wedge and/or a scorecard and pencil or other marking device.

Playing the game involves pitching and putting a golf ball through a series of hoops, just as a golf ball is pitched and putted at a series of holes at a golf course. For instance, a lawn golf course would be set up using a series of nine hoops, the nine hoops essentially defining the equivalent of nine holes on a real golf course.

A benefit of the invented game is the fact that the ease of play allows anyone to play. The game is one that can be played by people of different ages--young to old, and by people of diverse skill levels--beginners to professionals.

A further benefit of the invented game is teaching the rudimentary skills of golf. From learning how to hold a golf club to the proper way to chip or pitch a ball a short distance accurately, the invented game is an excellent way of learning the basics of golf.

Another benefit of the invented game is refining players' short game skills. Being able to putt and pitch/chip, often referred to as the short game, the ball properly and accurately is one of the most important skills needed in the game of golf. Playing the invented game helps the player to improve his or her short game by giving the player practice hitting balls different distances,

from differing surfaces and locations.

A further benefit of the invented game is the length of time required to play a “round”. A round of pitch and putt lawn golf can easily be played in a short period of time, such as a lunch hour, or even before and/or after dinner. Playing nine holes of the real game of golf is often an investment of two to three hours.

A further benefit of the invented game is the ability to be used on virtually any lawn. Whether the lawn is small or large, the invented game can be played on it. If the lawn is particularly small, the game can still be played, the players are only limited in the number of holes that can be played at one time. The lawn to be played upon can also range from a flat, open area to lawns having extensive landscaping.

Another benefit of the invented game is that the layout of the course is flexible. As such, the players can modify, rearrange and position the individual hoops in any number of ways, resulting in countless different configurations. In fact, the number of different “courses” that could be set up on a given lawn is virtually unlimited, as long as the players are creative in setting up the “course”.

Another benefit of the invented game is portability. The game can be set up almost anywhere: from a backyard, to a city park, to the beach, to the workplace. The game can be later taken down and either moved to another location or stored until its next use.

This flexible course layout lends itself to another benefit--challenge. The players are able to increase the challenge of the course each time they set-up the game. Increasing the challenge allows for a greater and longer use--the players are less likely to ever master the game because they are able to create more difficult courses easily.

Still another benefit of the invented game is that unlike the real game of golf, the invented game requires no holes to be cut in the lawn. In the real game of golf, holes must be cut in the golf course greens to receive hit golf balls. However, in the invented game, balls are pitched and putted through hoops and as such do not require the cutting of holes in the ground.

Another benefit of the invented game is the ease of setting the game up and taking the game down. Setting the game up is as simple as inserting a series of hoops in the ground in various locations within a yard. Taking down is just the opposite--merely requiring the removal of the hoops from the ground. This easy removal is especially important when the user needs to remove the hoops from the lawn in order to mow or water the lawn.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a view of the invented pitch and putt lawn golf game being played outdoors showing the use of the invented hole markers.

Figure 2 is a side view of one embodiment of a hole marker used in the game shown in Figure 1.

Figure 3 is a side view of another embodiment of a hole marker used in the game shown in Figure 1.

Figure 4 is a side view of another embodiment of a hole marker used in the game shown in Figure 1.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The present invention is a pitch and putt lawn golf game that can be played by persons of all ages, and by golfers and non-golfers alike.

As shown in **Figure 1**, the game comprises a series of hole markers **100**, a golf ball **10**, and a set of golf clubs for each and every player playing the game. Preferably, the golf club set comprises a putter, and a wedge, but alternatively, the set may also comprise a number of irons in place of, or in addition to, the wedge. The game may also comprise a scorecard and pencil or other marking device.

Figure 1 shows a putter **59** being used to strike or putt a ball **10** toward a hole marker **100**, the marker **100** being numbered “1”. This figure also shows how the player or players setting up the course can strategically position the markers **100** so as to place obstacles, such as a tree **99**, in between the markers **100** and the tee-off position, not shown.

The game preferably comprises a set of hole markers **100**. **Figure 2** shows the preferred embodiment of the invented hole marker **100**. Preferably, this set comprises nine, numbered, hole markers **100**. Each of these hole markers **100** comprises a generally vertical inverted hoop **20** attached to a generally vertical pin **30** which extends generally vertically to a flag **40**. The preferred hoop **20** is an inverted “U-shape”. Preferably, such attachment is at the apex **21**, or other uppermost center, of the inverted “U-shaped” hoop **20** and attached so that the pin **30** extends within the same vertical plane as the inverted “U-shaped” hoop **20**. However, if the upper portion of the hoop **20** is not rounded, but is instead squared **24**, as in **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**, then the pin **30** is to be attached at the center of the squared portion **24**. Such squaring could

be a length of wood or other material, as shown in **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**, or could be a square bend or piece of the same metal rod material used to create the hoop **20**, not shown. An added benefit of having such a squared portion **24** is the ability to install the marker **100** into the ground by pressing on the squared portion **24** with the foot. The length of the downward portions or legs **22** of the inverted hoop **20** is six to twelve inches, however any length greater than about 1.68 inches, the diameter of a golf ball, is envisioned.

The lowermost portions of the inverted “U-shaped” hoop **20** terminate in a pair of ground insertion points **25**. These points **25** may be blunt, sharpened or angled. The ground insertion points **25** are preferably four inches apart, however other distances are envisioned, but must be greater than about 1.68 inches, the diameter of a golf ball.

The pin **30** comprises a stiff piece of metal rod or other material, such as a plastic rod or wooden dowel rod. Preferably, the length of the generally vertical pin **30** is twelve to twenty-four inches long, however other lengths would work so long they are long enough to receive the flag **40**.

Placement of the marker **100** involves inserting, in a generally vertical fashion, the ground insertion points **25** into the ground to a depth deep enough to hold the hoop securely in place. This depth is generally one-half to two inches deep, but may be more or less depending on the hardness of the soil and the denseness of the ground cover. Preferably, all of the markers **100** used in a particular game will be inserted to the same depth so as to have a consistent opening through which to pitch or putt the ball from marker **100** to marker **100**. Such insertion is done so that the hoop **20** is positioned generally vertically. Alternatively, the marker **100** may not be

inserted into the ground, for instance, the side of the marker 100 may be slightly leaned against an object such as a fence rail for vertical support, thereby allowing the players to putt the ball through the hoop 20 and under the fence.

The inventor also envisions other methods and materials from which to make the “U-shaped” hoop. For instance, the “U-shaped” hoop could comprise a pair of legs 22 descending from the bottom of a lower insertion brace 24, as shown in **Figure 3**, or descending downward from the sides of the lower insertion brace 24, as shown in **Figure 4**. In both of these embodiments, the lower end of the pin 30 inserts into the top surface of the lower insertion brace 24. Other methods of attaching a pair of legs 22 to a pin 30 to form a hoop 20 are also envisioned.

The inventor also envisions other hole markers 100 specifically made for use on different surfaces, for instance, the ground insertion points 25 could terminate in a base, thereby allowing the hoops to be positioned on a hard surface, such as a sidewalk, or an interior floor.

The length of the generally vertical pin 30 allows for easy removal of the marker 100 from the ground. A player is not required to bend over very far to pull the marker 100 from the ground, but instead can merely reach down, grab the top portion of the pin 30, or the flag 40, and pull the marker 100 out of the ground. The length of the vertical pin 30 has another advantage--visibility. The higher the flag 40 is above the ground surface, the easier it will be to see the flag 40 from a distance. Preferably, the length of the generally vertical pin 30 is twelve to twenty-four inches; however, other lengths are acceptable provided they are long enough to receive the flag 40. The user can insert the marker 100 into the ground by pressing downward on

the pin 30 with his or her hand, thereby forcing the marker 100 into the ground.

In the preferred embodiment, the hoop 20 and the pin 30 of the hole marker 100 are made from a stiff metal rod, while the numbered flag 40 comprises a wooden block, painted, with a number painted thereon, said wooden block having a hole, not shown, along its bottom side for receiving the upper end of the pin 30. The numbered flag 40 may or may not be glued or otherwise affixed to the pin 30. However, it is envisioned by the inventor that the hole markers 100 may be made of any suitable material, especially the numbered flags 40 which the inventor envisions may also be made of a plastic or cloth-like material. However, Applicant believes that the best mode is a sturdy, injection-molded plastic hole marker 100 having plastic or adhesive indicia.

A benefit of having a rigid flag 40 rather than a cloth or other less rigid one is ease of installation--the user can insert the marker 100 into the ground by pressing downward on the flag 40 with his or her hand, thereby forcing the marker 100 into the ground.

The golf ball, putter, wedge and optional irons all comprise golf equipment common to the game of golf. Preferably, the golf balls 10 used are of differing colors in order to help the players easily distinguish one another's balls, but any color golf ball 10 may be used.

The scorecard and pencil will preferably be supplied with the game, however players are free to create their own scorecards and use their own pencils and other marking devices.

Any number of players may play the game at one time. Due to space considerations common to most areas in which the game is likely to be played, the number of players playing at one time is preferably four, but the total number is ultimately up to the players playing the game.

To play the game the course must be created first. Such course set-up is done by placing the markers **100** in the ground in various locations in the area in which the game is to be played. The layout of the markers **100** is up to the players, allowing the game to be used on any lawn, by players of every skill level. Placement of the markers **100** is also influenced by the skill or challenge sought by the players. For an easy game, the markers **100** could be placed within an open, level area of the yard or playing field. If the players wish to have a more challenging course, or more challenging “holes”, the markers **100**, or some of the markers **100**, could be placed in challenging locations. For instance, the players can take advantage of natural or artificial landscape features such as rock gardens, planters, trees, ponds, or moveable obstacles such as wheelbarrows, wheeled sculptures or wheeled planters in order to make a more challenging course. The players can also change the course pattern from time to time to make the game more interesting.

Preferably, the players will set at least nine markers **100** thereby allowing the players to work through the markers **100** sequentially, from marker **100** number one to marker **100** number nine. Other numbers of markers **100** may be used, more or less than nine, most preferably eighteen, the same number of holes in a round of golf.

While the game has certain set rules, the rules are intended to be flexible, allowing the players to customize the rules to make their playing experience more fun. The game is played by first determining an initial place to tee-off for the first marker **100**. All players will tee-off from this location, attempting to pitch and putt the ball to and through the hoop **20** of the first marker **100**. This process involves setting a golf ball **10** on the ground, aiming a club **59** and pitching or

putting the golf ball **10** toward a marker **100**. After all players have teed-off for the first marker **100**, the player whose ball is the farthest from the first marker **100** is allowed to take his or her second pitch or putt toward the first marker **100**. The players then all take turns pitching and putting their balls closer and closer to the first marker **100**, continuing until all of the players have moved their balls **10** through the first hoop **20**. The markers **100** do not have a front or back. The balls **10** may be driven through each hoop **20** from any direction.

Scoring involves counting the pitches and putts (“strokes”) required to get the ball **10** through the hoop **20**. For instance, if it took a player four pitches and one putt to move his ball **10** through the hoop **20**, then that player would have stroke count of five for that marker **100**. Each pitch or putt, or each attempted pitch or putt, results in a stroke. Each player is required to keep track of his or her individual strokes for each marker **100** or “hole” and is then to tell that number to the person carrying the scorecard at the completion of the hole, if the group of players has designated such a person. The fewer number of such pitches and putts, the better--the goal of the game being to end the game with the fewest number of strokes.

Alternatively, the goal of the game may be to win the most holes by having the fewest number of strokes on each of those holes. The player having the fewest number of strokes on a hole is deemed to have won that hole. For instance, if a player has the lowest stroke count of five of the nine holes, then that player has won five holes. The overall goal of the game is more about improving skills and scores rather than winning the game, making the game fun for both beginners and skilled golfers to play at the same time.

If the ball **10** goes out of bounds, for instance, if the ball **10** is pitched or putted off the

lawn, the player doing so is assessed an extra stroke penalty and the ball **10** is to be played from the point that it left the lawn. If the ball **10** hits an obstacle off the lawn and bounces back onto the lawn, the player is not assessed with a penalty. If the ball **10** lands in a location where the player is unable to pitch or putt the ball **10** toward the marker **100**, the player is allowed to move the ball **10** to a position allowing the player to pitch or putt the ball **10**. A one-stroke penalty may or may not be assessed. A one-stroke penalty means that the player penalized adds an additional stroke on his or her scorecard as a penalty.

After the completion of the first marker **100**, the players then take turns teeing-off for the second marker **100**. Teeing-off is to take place approximately one golf club's length from the previous hoop **20**. For instance, the teeing-off area, not shown in **Figure 1**, for hole number two would be located within a club's length from the hoop **20** of hole one.

The player with the lowest total number of strokes on the previous hole is given the privilege of making the first pitch or putt. Starting with player having the lowest stroke count from the previous hole and ending with the player having the highest stroke count from the previous marker **100**, the rest of the players then tee-off. This same process is followed for the rest of the markers **100**.

Before play begins, based on the difficulty of each of the marker **100** layouts, a par value for each marker **100** is designated. A default value of three is assigned to all the markers **100** in the course, but this number may be adjusted up or down depending on the difficulty of each of the markers **100**. Players would then be able to compare their final scores to the total par score for the course.

Although this invention has been described above with reference to particular means, materials and embodiments, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited to these disclosed particulars, but extends instead to all equivalents within the scope of the following claims.